

What is the Kingdom Like: Part 7

We have been studying the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ and how all who are true citizens of the Kingdom of God are called to be the righteousness of God in Him (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). We are to be like Jesus in this regard; His righteousness is to be our righteousness; and it is to be a righteousness that is practically known and lived, for it is not just a spiritual epithet that is to hang over our lives. He has given us the gift of righteousness and His righteousness is expressed in and through our lives when we realize that Jesus literally died to sin on our behalf, once and for all, enabling us to **consider** ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. After all, the life He now lives, He lives to God and so must we (**Romans 6:11**).

Last week we focused on what we are to do when we realize that we errantly still consider ourselves alive rather than dead to sin, and feel stuck not knowing how to escape this predicament. We know it is an issue of faith, similar to when we placed our faith in Jesus Christ to save us. But we have not yet learned how to *actively* believe the truth that we are dead to sin. We have not yet learned how His Name truly provides an alternative choice to every lustful, dishonorable, covetous, greedy, selfish, and fearful desire in our body. Accordingly, we realize that we only kind of love God, but we really do not love Him more than we love this world and all that we want out of this world. We hate that this is true, we hate that we still worry more about what others think than we do our heavenly Father. We have even tried to change our attitude and prideful reactions, we have tried to let our love for this world die, we have asked God to kill our *flesh*, we have “repented”

time after time, but for some God awful reason we remain stuck.

So we took a look at David through the lens of ***Psalm 119*** and the transformation he made when he stopped and considered the pathway of his life and realized that he also hated this part of his soul. What we found is that David turned to the Word of God and prioritized it above else. To him it was first in time, first in place, first in order, and first in importance. David truly sought first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as opposed to seeking first his own personal kingdom (as did Solomon) or even the kingdom of Israel. And what David found is that in seeking God through the Word of God, he met God and fell in love with Him; God became his obsession.

Honestly, what blows me away the most about David is that he was doused and anointed with the Holy Spirit, but he did not have access to the living God the way we do. After all, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and lives in our *New Creation*. Unlike David, we don't have to run to the Temple and sacrifice an animal to experience God, for we are the Temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in us (***1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16***). Or said another way, "... we have this treasure in earthen vessels (our bodies), so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (***2 Corinthians 4:7***). God literally dwells in our soul; that is so heady and such a powerful truth that should give each and every one of us hope and the expectancy that if we seek first the kingdom of God—above all else—and make it first in time, first in place, first in order, and first in importance, we too will all become lovers of God obsessed with Jesus Christ.

We summed it up last week by saying, if you choose to be ***intentional*** about spending time with God, with the desire to truly know Him; if you choose to be

undistracted and constantly mediate on His Word, think about Him, and consider the magnificence of His character; and if you choose to be **consistent** in this relationship, then I know you will fall completely in love with Jesus and you too will be obsessed; and you will want only Him. Everything in which you have tried to find value and worth will become more than worthless to you in comparison to the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe (**Ephesians 1:19**). Your idolatry of self—worthless. Your idolatry of marriage—worthless. Your idolatry of success—worthless. Your idolatry of your pain—worthless. Your idolatry of your intellect—worthless. Your idolatry of sexuality—worthless. Your idolatry of money—worthless. Your idolatry of family—worthless. It is all worthless in comparison to Christ in us—the hope of glory.

I want to continue in **Psalm 119** and explore David's transformation into a man who loved God and was so obsessed with the Word of God, such that he would never retreat and never slip into idolatry. As you are aware, this transformation never happens by a snap of God's fingers or a wink of His eyes. I wish it would; but is a transformation that comes by way of fire, by way of purification, by His teaching and convincing us that all we depend upon that is not Him is entirely worthless and will never ever truly help us.

If you remember, in **Psalm 119:59** David said he pondered the direction of his life and decided to follow only God. After which, David made an interesting request of God, which probably was the impetus to his personal transformation:

Psalm 119:73-74

You made me; you created me. Now give me the sense to follow your commands. May all who fear you find in me a cause for joy, for I have put my hope in your word.

David prayed not only for the understanding of the Word, but he prayed that his life would be an example to others. He wanted to be a spiritual leader where others found a reason to rejoice in God because they could see that he trusted God, waited on God, and put his hope in the Word of God. This was an honest desire that I know all true sons of God have dwelling in their soul; some of you have even prayed a similar prayer. Remember, if you delight yourself in the Lord, commit your ways to Him, trust in Him, He will give you the desires of your heart (***Psalm 37:4***). He will do it; and His one desire above all else, which He places in the soul of every true believer, is that they might be conformed into the image of His Son. After all, that is His predetermined goal for your life (***Romans 8:29***); which is why you cannot find peace, rest, and contentment apart from the fulfillment of this goal. If this goal does not burn in your heart, then you need to go back to the beginning and consider whether or not you truly have ever believed. But assuming that desire is in you, let's look at what David has to say about the fulfillment of this goal.

Psalm 119:65-71

You have done many good things for me, Lord, just as you promised. I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge. I used to wander

off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word. You are good and do only good; teach me your decrees. Arrogant people smear me with lies, but in truth I obey your commandments with all my heart. Their hearts are dull and stupid, but I delight in your instructions. My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.

I want you to notice the connection between discipline and intimacy. David went through so much distress in his life. He was pulled away from his family when he was just a boy and forced into the service of his king; he was a slave. Then before long, when David was just a young man, his king went insane with jealousy and tried to kill David. More than once David had to literally jump out of the way of his king's spear and flee for his life. But even then his king would not relent, he hunted David down from one end of Israel to another. No city was safe for him; his king had loyal spies everywhere and they were always waiting to pounce on David. **Psalm 119:87** says that David's enemies almost destroyed him and wiped him off the face of the earth. As a result, David spent years upon years living in the desert, in caves, and scrounging the hot wilderness to squeak out a paltry existence. His only friends and companions were outcasts, rebels, violent men who just wanted in on the action. This whole ordeal got so bad that in **Psalm 119:83, 107** David says that he was exceedingly afflicted, and had become like a wineskin in the smoke; basically, all withered, dried out, and tough.

Yet surprisingly, David is not crying out: "Lord, don't ever do that to me again; you have been so mean, cruel, merciless, and unloving to me. How could you? How could a loving God treat me like this? No good father treats his sons this way." No,

David understood that God used his time in exile to correct him and discipline him so he would come to rely not on himself but only on his God; and, therefore, be a king God could lift up in the glory of humility. So he says, “You have done many good things for me, Lord, just as you promised.” “You are good and do only good.”

One thing that has plagued our body now for many years is this obsession, and idolatry even, of our own pain. Many of you have had awful lives and even today those who should have loved you cannot even see what they have done to you. They love themselves more than they love you, and that is not going to change. It is like salt on an open wound. But you hold on to this pain believing it gives you the bullet proof “reason” or excuse as to why you do what you do. You hold your pain so near and dear that you use it to keep away anyone who tells you that you must **choose** to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God. It’s as if you say, while you stroke and coddle your pain, “If only you knew; but you have no idea what I have been through.” It is actually quite sick, twisted, victim, and very demonic. And the worse thing is this idolatry of your pain will literally prevent you from ever considering yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

“You have done many good things for me, Lord, just as you promised.” “You are good and do only good.” To the surprise of many, the correction which God brought into David’s life actually increased his desire for God; it did not push him away in anger and bitterness. David prayed: “teach me good judgment and knowledge” and he also declared that he delighted in the Lord’s instructions. When it was all said and done, he wanted more and more of God. Clearly David wrestled with God through his pain and he reconciled it to the goodness of God and God’s glorious purposes for David’s life; and now he is thankful and marvels over the wisdom

which God had for his life. This is why he said: “My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.”

What a glorious expression of trust. David’s goal for his life became the same as God’s goal—the righteousness of God. And this is what God desires for you. He wants you to seriously consider His goodness over your life, surrender your idol of pain, and realize that He was always just fulfilling His promise to make you like Him. He wants you now to agree with Him that He is good. He wants you to declare that all your suffering was good—every last bit of it—for His plan for your life is good, pleasing, and perfect. He wants you to declare this loudly, boldly, so that others will know the goodness of God and similarly reconcile their pain to His glorious purposes for their life. He wants you to crave, pine, and thirst for His life to be made manifest in yours, fully understanding that all He has done and all He will do is for your glory; or, more accurately, that you might share in the glory of His Son.

I want you to consider this word which God spoke to us on **08/14/2014**. It came when we were praying, as a body, about HOPE Foods, but what it speaks over our lives is incredible.

"The work that I am doing is truly beautiful and truly requires each and every one of you. Take a step back in the midst of all of this and look at what I have done. Look at what I have created! Look at what I am allowing each of you to experience and learn! You are privileged! You are blessed! Even if the company were to never take off, the ways I have blessed you are beyond what most people receive in a lifetime."

If you are not just about to bust out of your seat and scream: “You have done many good things for me, Lord, just as you promised. I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge,” then you still have a problem with the idolatry of your pain. Look at what He is doing, look at what He has done. It is truly beautiful and it requires all of us, every one of us. We are bound together in this effort. We are privileged and blessed beyond what most people receive in a lifetime. This is about as incredible as when Lucifer sneered at God and said, “*Of course they are strong and love you! You have protected them more than any other on the earth!*” The Lord has done good things, just as He promised. Please open your eyes, toss away your idol of pain, and be willing to look upon His goodness.

With all that David endured, I am sure it took some time; but David eventually came to understand the purpose of the Lord’s discipline in his life. “I used to wander off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word.” “My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.” I believe it is time to accept the fact that your *Old Sinful Nature* is hateful and rebellious and can never please God; it is not even able to do so. Which is why those who are in the flesh cannot please God (**Romans 8:7-8**). Truth be told, your *Old Sinful Nature* lives in a state of “wandering from the truth.” Thus, through discipline, through God’s goodness, He teaches you to no longer listen to its voice and to its demands of your life.

The troubles, trials, difficulties, persecutions, sufferings, and pain which God took you through from the day you were born, and for some of us even before we were born, is to teach you the worthlessness of living in a state of wandering away from the His Word. For those of us who have let the sufferings of God have its way

in our lives, I believe we can all say that He has taught us to pay attention to His Word and to closely follow His decrees knowing, believing, and experiencing them as our very life and breath.

David says, "Arrogant people smear me with lies." In context, what do you suppose these lies were? If the lies were connected to his time of suffering, I suppose they were such *audacious* decrees as: "God is mean and unfair;" "God is cruel and unjust;" "God is arbitrary and capricious;" and "God may work for others but He does not work for you," "God abandoned you." "God just wants you to suffer;" and "There is no true benefit in following God." But what did David say about those who spoke these lies: "Their hearts are dull and stupid." I know when I spoke those audacious lies, my heart was dull and stupid. I could not see beyond my pain; I could not see beyond my desire to run away and escape it all. But God in His goodness overpowered me with His love and I can now say just like David, "My suffering was good for me." In fact, I consider my suffering to be one of the many good things He has done for me. It has been my blessing, because now my goal for my life is the same as His goal for my life: to be like His Son.

Furthermore, because David knew and meditated on the Word day and night, he was able to fight those audacious lies with the truth. He said in ***Psalm 119:75***, "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." You see because David was convinced, by faith, that God's judgments are righteous. He therefore logically concluded that God was faithful in afflicting him, and was just doing what His righteousness required. In faithfulness God afflicts us; He has to afflict us or we will never be conformed into the image of His Son. Remember, your *Old Sinful Nature* will fight tooth and nail to remain in control of

your life. The only way to weaken, disempower, and dethrone him from his seat of authority is through affliction; it is necessary. We studied this in **1 Peter**; it is how we learn to live for the will of God and not for the demands of our *flesh*.

1 Peter 4:1-2

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

What a powerful concept. If you are really sick of only kind of loving God, if you are sick of being stuck, if you are sick of being so powerless, if you are sick of yourself, then invite God to bring the fire of His affliction. **Acts 14:24** says it is through many tribulations that we must enter the Kingdom of God. Embrace these tribulations, they are necessary.

The fire has been doing an amazing work in Group 1; and as it starts moving quickly toward Group 2 (and after that Group 3), I encourage you to not fight or resist, but arm yourself with the same purpose of suffering so He can be thorough and exacting and you won't have to revisit these places of unbelief ever again. Don't be surprised, He will use the wicked of this world, your friends, anything really, to press on those areas of your life where you do not *actively* believe the truth; and if you let this time of affliction have its way, the result will be fantastic. You will cease from sin (which is rendered in the *perfect middle indicative*). The *perfect* tense

means that it will be a done deal; never having to go back. You will learn to love righteousness and hate lawlessness. The *middle* voice means that suffering is the means though which God trains you, for God does not make you choose to cease from sin, rather, you will make the choice. You will become convinced of its necessity and dig down deep in your soul and choose to no longer present yourself to sin and your members as instruments of unrighteousness. The *indicative* means this is a statement of fact—you will be free. God's fire will purify your soul and you will gladly choose to live in His righteousness by considering yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. It is all so beautiful.

Hebrews 12:11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Remember, we started by saying that we must be **intentional** in our pursuit of God, we must be **undistracted**, and we must be **consistent**. It is through suffering and affliction that we learn to reach down deep in our soul and choose to continue to walk forward through the Lord's fire regardless of the intensity of the flame. This is how we are trained in righteousness. Not allowing ourselves to be **distracted** by our pain and choosing to remain **consistent** is so difficult for many of us; but when you know the end point, the beautiful result, like David you too can choose to endure and remain **consistent**. David says, "Many are my persecutors and my

adversaries, yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies” (*Psalm 119:157*). That is the decree I would love to hear from every one of you as God is taking you through the fire. There must be no retreat and no compromise but you are to maintain the course toward righteousness and the reward of peace will be yours.

I love the idea that our suffering yields, or produces, the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Those words have a beautiful ring to them: peaceful fruit of righteousness. The righteousness of the Lord brings: calm, rest, freedom from disturbance, tranquility. Can you imagine? In this dark world we can know peace. Through affliction, we can become so obsessed with the Lord and what He is doing that this world will not be able to disturb our calm. David says, “Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble” (*Psalm 119:165*). What a promise: not just peace, but great peace and stability. This is why Peter says, if you are reviled for the name of Christ, if you suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you (*1 Peter 3:14, 4:14-15*).

Through affliction you will learn to love righteousness and hate lawlessness and the Father will anoint you with the oil of gladness more than your companions. And when your appointed time of suffering is over, the fire will go out and you will know His peace and will be able to pray: May all who fear you find in me a cause for joy, for I have put my hope in your word. But to get there you must choose to be **intentional**, **undistracted**, and **consistent** turning to the Word to seek God believing that if you seek Him you will find Him when you search for Him with all your heart.

Before I close, there is one further blessing and benefit you will enjoy. *James*

5:16 tells us that the fervent prayers of a righteous man will accomplish much. So in addition to peace and stability, you will also know the power that comes when you pray according to the will of God. Through your petitions, through your prayers, much will be accomplished as the Spirit of God, who abides in you, will fill you and guide you in what you should pray. “This is the confidence we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And we know that if He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him” (**1 John 5:14-15**). This is so exciting.

For example, as you know I will be meeting with a certain someone this week. God told me to tell her about the Kingdom, but He also warned me that it would all pass through her. At prayer, I knew God wanted us to pray that those holes would be filled and that the word she heard would have a place to land and grow. He responded by saying, “I have heard your request.” Now, I can go in confidence knowing that I will not be wasting my time, but His living and abiding Word will do its job and it will plant in her soul giving her an opportunity to choose His truth. As He said, **Isaiah 55:10-11**, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” This is the benefit, the blessing of the righteous.

The kingdom of God is a righteous kingdom and so are its citizens. We all however must learn how to let His righteousness be made know and manifest from our lives. Over the past 4 weeks we have talked quite practically in terms of how

this is actually experienced in our lives. I encourage you to go back and study it and really seek the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and I guarantee—He guarantees—that you will find Him. If the fire is not already burning, it soon will be. Be ready, get yourself prepared. Fire is never easy, but the result will be beautiful if you let it do its job in your life that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 1:7**).

In closing:

1 John 3:7-10

Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Let's Pray